

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 4, 2005

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item No. 18: Consideration of resolution authorizing adding the following projects in Los Angeles and Ventura counties to the Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram: Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower; 118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector; Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch; Fryman Canyon-8701-8715 Mulholland; Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, and Pacoima Wash Greenway.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing adding the following projects to the Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram: Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower; 118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector; Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch; Fryman Canyon-8701-8715 Mulholland; and Pacoima Wash Greenway.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33203 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The current Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram was adopted in 2000. Subsequent to that adoption, the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor was expanded a third time to include all lands south of the Antelope Valley (SR14) Freeway in the Santa Clara River watershed. In addition, the passage of Proposition 50 modified the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains Zone to include all portions of the Los Angeles River watershed from the northernmost point of the City of Vernon. During the last four and a half years, projects have been periodically added. All projects in the adopted 2000 Workprogram were prioritized based on extensive, quantified evaluation criteria. However, subsequent projects have not been evaluated with these criteria.

Generally, projects are added to the Workprogram to take advantage of opportunity purchases (such as tax defaulted properties and bargain sales), to accommodate area specific funding

sources, and to compensate for prior omissions. The proposed action would add fifteen projects to the Acquisition Workprogram. The sixteenth project listed on this agenda item, Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, does not need to be added to the Acquisition Workprogram because no land acquisition is necessary.

A project boundary map, a brief project description, and the rationale for adding each project follows. In order for the Conservancy to authorize a grant to another entity to acquire a property, it must be on the Acquisition Workprogram. Furthermore, in Los Angeles County, in order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds on a project, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually to the Conservancy as part of its annual report.

Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell

This 77-acre project area is a single, partially developed parcel adjacent to Wildwood Canyon Park. It is perched above the upper reaches of the Arroyo Conejo. Rockwell is processing a map for 25-units spread over portions of the property. A detailed letter addressing the importance of the property from Conserve Our Rural Environment is attached.

Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration

This 10.4-acre project area extends along a section of Las Lajas Creek from Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's (RSRPD) Simi Hills golf course to south of the 118 Freeway. It involves both the acquisition of private parcels and modifications to the Las Lajas Creek channel on both RSRPD and Ventura County Flood Control District properties. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. This project should be added to Conservancy Workprogram because it elevates the project as being important to a State agency. State bond funds cannot be used as project match.

Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration

This project site consists of a combination of 44.5 acres of public (school district) and private land located south of Cochran and east of Madera, just north of the Arroyo Simi. The project would capture and treat stormwater runoff in a natural setting with high quality restored habitat. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. This project should be added to Conservancy Workprogram because it elevates the project as being important to a State agency. State bond funds cannot be used as project match.

Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower

This 487-acre project provides a critical gap in the contiguous land connection between the central core habitat of the Santa Susana Mountains and both existing and potential wildlife undercrossings beneath the 118 Freeway in Moorpark. It essentially is an addition to the Moorpark-Messenger (Northpark) Workprogram project. It substantially contributes to inter-mountain range wildlife movement between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills and should be acquired.

118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector

This 206-acre project provides a critical gap in the contiguous land connection between the Alamos Canyon - 118 Freeway interchange (undeveloped) and the Arroyo Simi. It substantially contributes to inter-mountain range wildlife movement between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills and should be acquired or permanently protected. Much of the land is already owned by Ventura County Parks Department.

Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South

This 11.5-acre project provides prime, shady, and level recreation and habitat lands at the edge of San Fernando Valley. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. In order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for the matching portion of a grant, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually to the Conservancy as part of its annual report.

Plummer-Variel Restoration

This unique, 18-acre project is located just east of the Santa Susana Wash in Chatsworth. All of the land is privately owned (90 percent in a single ownership). This large, flat open area would make an unparalleled urban park and natural area. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.

Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration

This 13.5-acre project proposes to use a combination of unused street rights-of way and private

land to create urban green space and habitat. The probable project size is closer to 1.7 acres because of land costs. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.

Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration

This 4.3-acre project would convert surplus Caltrans parcels and 101-Freeway rights-of-ways into urban green space and habitat. Funding may be necessary to acquire less than two acres of Caltrans surplus property. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.

Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration

This 2.75-acre project would enhance an existing green space currently heavily used by surrounding residents. Most of the subject property is publicly-owned but there are a few small private parcels with gardens and electronic equipment. The project's strong recreation value by itself warrants inclusion on the Workprogram. This project could be funded with Proposition A Big Five River Parkway Excess Funds.

Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration

This 6.29-acre project offers an opportunity to provide urban green space and habitat in the southwest San Fernando Valley. Small portions of the project area are publicly-owned and the remainder is private with at least four separate ownerships. It has good characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.

Canoga Avenue-MTA Right of Way

This 16-acre project is proposed entirely on land owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.

Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch

This 7-acre project is the most desirable privately-owned natural open space in the west San Fernando Valley. It is bisected by unused City right-of-way for Woodlake Avenue. It does not have excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles, but is worthy for acquisition nonetheless using other funding sources.

Fryman Canyon - 8701-8715 Mulholland

This .5-acre project is a critical inholding along the edge of Fryman Canyon Park in Studio City and a vital portion of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. The majority of the funding for this project is anticipated to come from the MRCA's Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation District No. 1 funds, but some supplemental State funding will also be needed to acquire this property that abuts State-owned parkland on three sides.

Pacoima Wash Greenway

This 180-acre project includes numerous, mainly privately-owned, parcels along both sides of Pacoima Wash in the City of San Fernando and northwards towards the San Gabriel Mountains. The project is designed to form a greenway and bikeway that extends a minimum of three miles from the edge of the mountains to the core of the San Fernando Valley. The MRCA submitted two prospective grant applications to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. One grant is to improve property recently acquired by the MRCA with a Conservancy grant. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at end of the above Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South paragraph.